5-2021

Reading on the home front: the evolution of U.S. children's literature and American values during wartime conflicts

Sophie Barton

University of Tennessee at Chattanooga, yss442@mocs.utc.edu

Reading on the Home front: The Evolution of U.S. Children's Literature and American Values during Wartime Conflicts

Sophie Kathleen Barton

Honors Thesis

The University of Tennessee at Chattanooga

Department of History

Examination Date: April 16, 2021

_____

Dr. Susan Eckelmann Berghel
Project Director

_____

Dr. Mark Johnson

_____

Dr. William Kuby

Introduction

"But now… I'll braver be; I'll march forth in the van; Will fight for truth, and do whate'er I can."[1] John T. Townsbridge's *The Drummer Boy*, published in 1862, tells a story of a young boy, Bill, who bravely joined Union soldiers during the Civil War. Townsbridge's prose invokes patriotism and American duty inviting young readers to follow Bill's example. A closer examination of children's print culture during American wartimes adds an important and understudied dimension to the scholarship on the history of American war. By contrasting children's experiences and print culture produced during wartimes, historians gain a fuller understanding about changing American cultural values and the channels by which ideologies were transmitted to children as subjects and through children as symbols. Children's print culture represents a repository that allows historians to examine adult attitudes toward childhood. Beyond the assumed innocence of the nursery, this thesis uncovers the mobilization of children as citizen soldiers. Children's literature plays a vital role in understanding how children's perspectives changed during national and global conflicts. Examining popular texts exhibited in American nurseries, this thesis unpacks the varied messages adults imparted on children during wartime.

Children's literature represents a window into the evolution of childhood. Not only does children's literature reveal the lessons and values adults believed to be important during particularly volatile times, but it also makes visible how modern childhood itself developed. By examining children's print culture produced and disseminated during the Civil War, World War One, and World War Two, I argue that the medium reproduced regional understandings of power,

[1] John Townsbridge, *The Drummer Boy* (Boston: Lee and Shepard, 1862), 7.

race, and gender while offering avenues of escape, even if only temporary, and that, over time, authors and publishers increasingly embraced American pride and hegemony.

Historian Anne Scott Macleod argues that, through American children's literature, print culture mirrors conceptions about race, class, and gender as well as the adult's attitudes toward childhood.[2] Similarly, James Marten and William Tuttle examine American childhood in the context of the Civil War and World War Two, respectively. In *The Children's Civil War*, Marten examines the various effects of the war on children and how children carried the wartimes as symbols of hope and freedom.[3] In *Daddy's Gone to War,* Tuttle focuses on children's voices and contributions during the war and its impact on family dynamics.[4] In *Huck's Raft: A History of American Childhood*, Steven Mintz sheds light on the devasting consequences of wartime in the course of American history on children's lives.[5] My research considers a broader historical arch by examining children's literature produced during some of bloodiest and most influential wars: the Civil War, World War One, and World War Two. I contend that children's literature invited youth to participate on the home front espousing patriotism and civil duty, in other words to perform citizenship. Children's print culture helped children make sense of and navigate an uncertain world by transforming them into citizen soldiers. Historian James Marten explains, "Although the moral lessons that could be gleaned from the war were obviously important, children's books and magazines made the political meaning of the war an even higher priority."[6]

Race and region shaped children's wartime experiences. Children's literature mirrored sectional conflict and racist tropes. For instance, Marinda Moore's *The Geographical Reader for*

---

[2] Anne Scott MacLeod, *American Childhood: Essays on Children's Literature of the Nineteenth and Twentieth Century* (Athens and London: The University of Georgia Press, 1994), vii.
[3] James Marten, *The Children's Civil War* (Chapel Hill: The University of North Carolina Press, 1998), 1.
[4] William Tuttle, *Daddy's Gone to War* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1993), x.
[5] Steven Mintz, *Huck's Raft: A History of American Childhood*, (Cambridge: Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 2004), 3.
[6] Marten, *The Children's Civil War*, 23.

the Dixie Children, published in 1863, and James Campbell's *Our Own Third Reader: for the Use of Schools and Families, published in 1862* conveyed pedagogical lessons and ideological messages that cast the Confederacy as a new "country."[7] Enslaved children's experiences consisted of family separation, backbreaking labor, economic oppression, and racial violence, but also of hope for freedom. Enslaved children's literature gained significance at the end of the war when organizations attempted to integrate freedmen and women into a white society.

Early twentieth century children's literature reveals a greater emphasis on protecting children's innocence through fictional diversions transporting young audiences to a different world not afflicted with war and violence. Historian and World War One expert James Kennedy notes, "While warning against emphasis on 'the terrible and repulsive,' the government pamphlets nevertheless encouraged instructors to appeal 'primarily to the imagination and to the emotions' of their young pupils."[8] While children were politicized, in and beyond the classroom, adults sought to protect children from the real horrors and destruction that wars caused. The popularity of fantasy worlds, the personification of animal characters, and predictable storylines gave children a mechanism through which they could escape from the war. They became part of the children's stories they read. Some American authors used literature to mold children's political beliefs by celebrating American democracy, reinforcing traditional ideas (for instance, through assigned gender roles), and molding young audiences' understanding of global issues that centered on American hegemony. The evolution from religiously themed-wartime literature into politically focused-children's literature reveals a drastic change during and following World War One.

---

[7] Marinda Branson Moore, *The Geographical Reader, for the Dixie Children* (Raleigh: Farrar and Co., 1863), 14.
[8] David M. Kennedy, *Over Here: The First World War and American Society* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1980), 55.

Assuming children as blank slates, World War II-era authors recast youth as vessels for U.S. hegemony. James Marten and Robert Coles, a child psychologist, analyzed the impact of wartime on children and noted, "youngsters seem to understand war more instinctively than they do peace. They can conjure up images of the former much more readily and concretely that the latter; peace remains an abstract idea reflecting an inner state rather than relationships among groups."[9] Children found peace in the stories they read even when the world abroad left trails of destruction, death, and genocide. World War II-era children literature linked adventurous tales with political messages. Books took children on action-packed journeys to defeat the Nazis and Japanese, America's enemies. Patriotism for the United States marked the pages of World War Two-era literature. In comparison to the Civil War and World War One, authors during World War Two were generally focused on disseminating political ideas and militarizing American children. World War One-era children's texts immersed children in the war through a cadre of fictive characters without direct references to war. Government-sponsored propaganda that centered on child figures and sought to advance broader political messages filled that void. In one of his fireside chats in 1941, President Franklin D. Roosevelt called upon children directly, "We are now in this war... Every single man, woman, and child is a partner in the most tremendous undertaking of our American history. We must share together the bad news and the good news, the defeats and the victories—the changing fortunes of war."[10] President Roosevelt called upon children to make them feel connected to the war. Compared to World War One, the United Sates emersed children in the wartime effort, representing not only the evolution of

[9] James Marten and Robert Coles, *Children and War: A Historical Anthology* (New York: New York University Press, 2002), 5.

[10] Franklin D Roosevelt, "Fireside Chat," (New York: Library of Congress, December 9, 1941).

childhood, but societal values about childhood. Children no longer needed to be shieled from the gruesome realities, but instead were exposed young eyes to violence and global conflict.

Advancing Ideology & Restoring Racial Differences: Civil War-era Children's Literature

The experiences of white Unionist children, white confederate children, and enslaved children offers a window into understanding the impact of the Civil War. During the Civil War, children's experiences varied based on region, socioeconomic background, gender and race, and other resources available to them. Black children's experiences varied based their status as free and unfree people, where they were located in the United States, and whether their family structure was intact. White Union children also depended on various factors, but they were less exposed to wartime violence. Some saw battles play out in the North like those did in Gettysburg, but for the most part, children in the North were shielded from the traumatic and bloody conditions of war. Wartime adventures enticed northern boys to join the war effort as drummer boys, for instance. Through children's documented experiences, historians have drawn conclusions about how the war impacted children.

Although fathers and brothers were called away to the frontlines, many northern children, especially boys, saw the war with excitement and adventure. The Union, although more financially prepared confronted harsh conditions and setbacks. The war wore on the Unions' resources. Hermon DeLong, a seven-year-old boy, recounted the changes to his life as a result of the outbreak of the Civil War. He noted in his journal, "Peanuts were rare and wormy, and sticks of candy were reduced to the size of pipe stems."[11] While DeLong pointed to the malnutrition of children, he also acknowledged that a sense of normalcy remained in the North, noting "People

[11] Hermon W. Delong, *Boyhood Reminiscences: Life in Dansville 1855-1872* (Dansville, NY: Dansville Press, 1913).

married and were given in marriage, business throve, and we boys kept right on with our tasks and sports. Our bodies and our minds developed with the passing years and all political differences were buried when we met on the ball field, at the swimming hole our at our homes."[12] While the war affected many aspects of children's lives in the North, they were shielded to some extent in comparison the children of the Confederacy.

Confederate children saw the life they knew—racial hierarchies, family life, and economic comfort—completely upended. Fathers, brothers, and mothers participated in the war effort in some way, which required children to step up and fulfill necessary roles at home. Historian James Marten explains, "If war often meant reflective funerals and shoddy candy for northern children, it could mean blood and destruction for southern children."[13] Southern white children were forced to take on responsibilities meant for southern white adults. They were forced to accept that times had changed; their childhood were put on pause for the Confederacy. Carrie Berry, a ten-year-old child from Atlanta, Georgia, lamented in her diary on the day of her birthday: "I did not have a cake. Times are too hard. I hope that by next birthday, we will have peace in our land."[14] In her memoir, Sue Chancellor also echoed wartime challenges and she recounted Union soldiers' arrival in her hometown in Virginia. She explained, "They [Union soldiers] come in a sweeping gallop up the big road with swords and sabres clashing…" and, as a result, she would "run and hide and pray more and harder than ever in my life, before or since."[15] Southern children especially faced many challenges. The Civil War impacted enslaved children in lasting ways beyond the military conflict. Not surprisingly, enslaved children had little or no

[12] *Ibid,* 70-73.
[13]James Marten, *The Children's Civil War*, 7.
[14] Susan M. Chancellor, *Personal Recollections of the Battle of Chancellorsville* (Frankfort, KY: Register of the Kentucky Historical Society, 1968).
[15] *Ibid,* 43.

access to resources, if any at all. With most resources being allocated to the warfront, food, medicine, and basic necessities were not rationed for black Southerners. Wartime only worsened the lives of enslaved children.[16] The hope of freedom mobilized many enslaved people to join the frontlines of the war.

Children's literature produced during wartime reflected some of the experiences that young citizens confronted and documented in their diaries. Children's literature echoed the changes children witnessed and mirrored the resources available to the different groups of children. In the North, children's literature mainly helped distract children from the realities of wartime while also boasting wartime victories and Unionist ideologies. Although food and other basic necessities had to be rationed, northern children's needs were largely met. In the South, children's literature solely served as a channel to propagate political and racial ideologies. Children's needs were not met consistently, and children's literature explained to its young audience why basic necessities were not available and the important political and cultural roles they inherited. Regardless of region, children's literature embraced a common goal: the increasing wartime mobilization of young Americans. Children's most active role during the Civil War involved serving as soldiers, drummer boys, or messengers on the frontlines or at home as so-called citizen soldiers through which they took on adult roles by taking care of siblings and doing family chores. Children contributed to the war effort by producing and rationing food. Deceived by children's literature, like *The Drummer Boy*, which depicted war as an adventure, young boys joined the frontlines of the war learning quickly the physical and psychological costs of battle.

[16]James Marten, *The Children's Civil War*.

Published in 1862 by John T. Trowbridge, a Unionist writer, *The Drummer Boy* represents an example of children's literature and wartime propaganda. Trowbridge, a self-taught writer, mainly wrote for newspapers but, during the Civil War, he shifted his focus toward younger audiences. His fifteen books mostly targeted children and focused on wartime issues.[17]

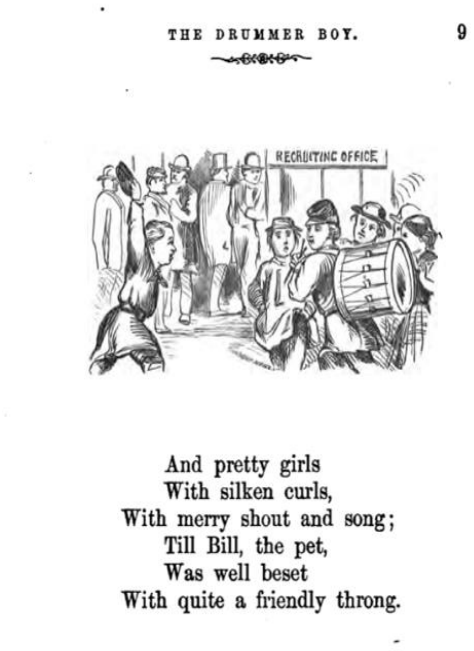
Trowbridge framed *The Drummer Boy* as a poem that depicted the "adventure" Billy, a young boy from the Union, who becomes a drummer boy for the Union army. At first glance, readers may be amused by its upbeat tone, but this wartime-themed book reveals adults' efforts to politicize and mobilize children for war, mirroring cultural attitudes about young people. Adults regarded young citizens as critical vessels for political change and the implementation of wartime objectives. The poem implied that leaving for war entailed adventure: "Bill's drum was heard; And all hearts stirred; Their country's wish to know; And all declared; Themselves prepared; To take a fun and go."[18] Wartime readiness emanated from these lines. Civil War-themed children's books obscured the realities of war conflict.

The poem emphasizes the pride, the joy, and the patriotic duty one experiences when serving as a drummer boy. These messages left out the real-life experiences of drummer boys, messengers, and soldiers who experienced trauma and horrors of war. In *Huck's Raft,* historian Steven Mintz features a young boy, only twelve, who was injured as a drummer boy noting "his left hand and arm were shattered by an exploding shell."[19] Trowbridge made the Civil War appear as an exciting adventure that children should aspire to be a part of while obscuring and embellishing the hard realities of war. The book appealed to young boys who were called upon to join the war effort in hopes of a fun adventure while concealing death and hardship.

---

[17] *Who's Who* (Chicago: A & C Black, 1907), 1772.
[18] John Trowbridge, *The Drummer Boy*, 16.
[19] Steven Mintz. *Huck's Raft: A History of American Childhood* (Cambridge: Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 2004), 120.

Trowbridge emphasized ideas about and significance of masculinity. The story stresses that "such boys make men."[20] The author does not directly address female readers subjugating their roles during the war. Furthermore, Trowbridge stressed the importance of the pride for the Union and the celebrations awaiting their return from war as the illustrations in the book show townspeople surrounding Bill as cheerful and proud [Image 1.2].[21]


THE DRUMMER BOY. 9

And pretty girls
With silken curls,
With merry shout and song;
Till Bill, the pet,
Was well beset
With quite a friendly throng.

Image 1.2: John T. Trowbridge, *The Drummer Boy*, p. 9.

Trowbridge ultimately celebrated the drummer boy assigning boys active roles as wartime participants and citizens. Trowbridge did not address girls, but once. They are cast as cheerleaders on the sidelines as Bill and the other soldiers leave for war.[22] The female characters appear in domesticated roles. The reality was far more complex. Mintz notes, "not all children

[20] John Trowbridge, *The Drummer Boy*, 16.
[21] *Ibid*, 9.
[22] *Ibid*.

soldiers were boys. Perhaps 400 women took on male aliases in order to serve in the Civil War."[23] Trowbridge overlooks demotes girls and their important roles in the Union by focusing on the strength and bravery reserved for boy protagonists. Historian Anne Scott MacLeod asserts, "The concept of boyhood that shaped their [Civil War-era children's authors] books meant that protagonists were defined primarily by their relation the conventional mores of the community."[24] By reserving the characteristics of bravery and strength to boys, Trowbridge limited girls' involvement in the war and de-emphasized the active roles they played during the Civil War.

Additionally, this poem divides the nation politically celebrating Union pride and casting animosity toward the Confederacy. As Bill and the other Union soldiers march through the North, Trowbridge writes, "The praises sung; Of the Union volunteer."[25] Trowbridge, in this line, uses war to instill national values and secure freedom. Trowbridge further reiterates the significance of volunteering to serve in the Union Army. The narrative and illustrations mirror national efforts to politicize children. Another stanza casts the Confederacy as the enemy: "News came that day; The rebel mob comes on; With sword in hand; With torch and bread; To burn up Washington."[26] The enemy in this story equals violence. Trowbridge targeted a Unionist audience. As the Civil War progressed, Trowbridge mirrored the need to mobilize all children by encouraging them to participate in war and by embracing the wartime objectives. By depicting the Confederacy as an unruly mob, Trowbridge instilled hatred in Union children's minds.

---

[23] Steven Mintz, *Huck's Raft*, 121.
[24] Anne Scott MacLeod, *American Childhood: Essays on Children's Literature of the Nineteenth and Twentieth Century* (Athens and London: The University of Georgia Press, 1994).
[25] Trowbridge, *The Drummer Boy*, 15.
[26] *Ibid*, 27.

Ultimately, this publication celebrated wartime enlistment while shaping young boys' attitudes toward the Confederacy and white southerners. At a crucial moment of the war, *The Drummer Boy* aimed to instill Union pride in children and strengthen their political loyalty. *The Drummer Boy* represents an important piece of both Civil War-themed children's literature and wartime propaganda that demonstrated how adult authors recruited children to the war and instructed them how to understand their place during and after the war.

Although adults aimed to help children understand their role, it is apparent that the stories in children's books deviated from the actual experiences. For instance, adults' diaries highlighted parental concerns about children's exposure to wartime cruel realities. Dolly Sumner, a southern white mother and plantation owner, who lived in Covington, Georgia wrote in her diary on Christmas morning in 1864, "Sadai [Sumner's daughter] jumped out of bed very early this morning to feel in her stocking. She could not believe but that there would be something in it. Finding nothing, she crept back into bed, pulled the cover over her face, and I soon heard her sobbing."[27] Sumner's diary reveals her own impotence to insulate her children from the consequences of wartime. Resources limited the level of comfort parents could provide for their children.

Often times, adult authors also used children's magazines to propagate vital political message. Children's magazines played a vital role in children's culture as a source of information and propaganda. Mintz explains that children's magazines "provided models of moral behavior" including "dutifully obeying their parents, working hard, and accepting their lots in life with humility and gratitude."[28] Furthermore, magazines produced during the Civil

[27] Dolly Sumner Lunt, *A Woman's Wartime Journal: AN Account of the Passage Over a Georgia Plantation of Sherman's Army on the March to the Sea, as Recorded in the Diary of Dolly Sumner Lunt* (New York: The Century Co., 1918), 44-45.
[28] Steven Mintz, *Huck's Raft,*120.

War detailed important wartime information for children in age-appropriate ways, especially after the war. The Union magazine *Our Young Folks* was launched in January 1865 and lasted until 1873.[29]

By April 1865, the Civil War was coming to an end. Confederate General Robert E. Lee surrendered his army to General Ulysses S. Grant and many southern states surrendered to Union troops.[30] "The Little Prisoner," a short story published by Edmund Kirke that month, in the children's magazine *Our Young Folks*, chronicled a crucial transition from wartime to Reconstruction. "The Little Prisoner" tells a story about a young boy named James, who was injured during Civil War battle. Aunty Katy, an abandoned slave, takes the boy into her home and nurses him back to health.

Kirke's depiction of "Aunt Katy" revealed his support for the Unionist. Kirke characterizes "Aunt Katy" as kind and Christian woman who strove to improve James's live. Kirke humanized black women but also stressed their support for white men. In this way, Aunt Katy is casted as a helper. Kirke's narrative instilled empathy among children for black women whose own children were ripped away from them to be sold or who left for the war.[31] Kirke writes, "No, he [her son] haint [aint] dead, honey, -not dead; but he 'm loss and gone now, - loss and gone from ole Katy-foreber [forever]."[32] Kirke instills empathy in two ways through this one quote. He first invokes sorrow by revealing Katy's son had been taken away from her. Although Kirke does not detail the separation, it can be assumed that Katy and her son split through the vicious system of the slave market and trade. The second way Kirke instills emotions is through Katy's speech, which is presented quite differently from James's speech. The vernacular style is a reflection of the way

[29] Gordon R. Kelly, *Children's Periodicals of the United States* (Westport: Greenwood Press 1984), 243.
[30] Jay Winik, *April 1865: The Month That Saved America* (New York: Harper Collins Publishers, 2001), 175.
[31] Mintz, *Huck's Raft: A History of American Childhood*, 96.
[32] Edmund Kirke, "The Little Prisoner" in *Our Young Folks* (Boston: April 1865), 242.

Kirke perceived black people's speech. James's style of speech does not reflect the color of his skin, his education, his region, or his age. Marten argues that Kirke's use of language represented a common feature of Civil War children's literature. Marten explains, "When Jacob Abbott and others featured African Americans in their stories and novels, they burdened even the most sympathetic characters with stereotypes and the condescension and patronizing attitudes of the clearly more intelligent white characters."[33] Marten points out how the stereotypes of black people crowded the few books that featured black characters. While it is true that Kirke is acting progressively by having a black protagonist, it is evident that the vernacular that Kirke uses for Katy sets her apart and reinforces the idea of separation of whites and blacks.

The story acknowledges James's appreciation for Katy's efforts that kept him alive, but it also undermined the critical roles black women played during the war. His description preserves the direction of power and race. Kirke writes,

> For this reason, the old negress was alone in the great mansion and to this fact James owed his preservation; for, though her white owners might have given him hospitable care, they would not have afforded him the devoted attention which she had, and that it was which saved his life.[34]

This is a crucial moment in children's literature as it shows a connection between a young white boy and a formerly enslaved black woman. Kirke's story amplifies unity and interracialism. But young readers will internalize that the humanization of Black women is linked to their role as servants to white men. As the end of the war was approaching, Kirke celebrated a sense of unity among black and white Americans.

Although Kirke encouraged for interracial unity between black and white people, his story also reassured his readers that racial differences remained. Through the dialogue between James

---

[33] James Marten, *The Children's Civil War*, 40.
[34] *Ibid,* 244.

and Katy, the author contrasts the young boy's formal and clear speech against Katy's vernacular and, at times, unclear words. For example, when addressing the end of the war, Katy says, "It 'pears long ter you, honey, but ole Katy hab waited a'most all har life- eber sense she come over in de slave-ship."[35] Katy points out to James that if the Civil War has seemed like a long, drawn out war to him, she has waited for this moment though which she gains her freedom her entire life. Through these different vernacular styles, Kirke demonstrates to white readers that the end of slavery did not erase white power.

Interestingly, Kirke casts the uprising of the Confederacy as "the wicked Rebellion."[36] As the war drew to a close, northerners felt they were regaining control over the South. The story explained to young readers that the Civil War was the product of Southern white rebellion that undermined the peace of the nation. He vilified the South casting the region as the enemy.

This publication serves a great example of how pro-Union adult writers attempted to align Northern children's ideas with political objectives that reflected racist ideas. While embracing conditional interracialism, the author called for resentment toward the South. Kirke depicts Katy as a caring woman who nursed James back to health. James shows gratitude and empathy toward the former slave. While wartime ushered in peace, the postwar era did not eliminate racial differences and provided historical narratives that cast the North as the liberator.

Since most of the fighting took place in the South, southern children were more likely to be physically caught in action. Children reflected in their personal journals and letters about their experiences on the frontlines and the various hardships they faced. Celine Fremaux, a young girl from Baton Rouge, Louisiana, directly felt the effects of the wartime and recounted her experience. She worried, "In these few months, my childhood has slipped away from me.

---

[35] *Ibid*, 245.
[36] *Ibid*.

Necessity, human obligations, family pride and patriotism had taken entire possession of my little emancipated body."[37] Confederate children felt as though their childhood became another casualty of the war. Many of the freedoms enjoyed by children were no longer accessible as Civil War battles played out in their backyards where they once played.

Children did not have consistent and easy access to children's books, especially Confederate, impoverished, and non-white young readers. Historian James Marten explains, "Southern publishers plagues by shortages of ink, paper, and skilled printers focused less on publishing magazines and books and more on instructional literature, including over two dozen catechisms and hymnals."[38] Through textbooks and instructional literature, the Confederacy promoted their ideologies to children while rebuilding an educational system.

Marinda Branson Moore, a Confederate children's author, wrote *The Geographical Reader for the Dixie Children* in 1863, at the height of the Civil War. In the introduction of the book, Moore states her reasoning for writing this text: "Having found most of the juvenile books too complex for young minds, I have for some time intended making an effort to simplify the science of geography."[39] Children textbooks not only provided a way for the Confederate adults to educate children, but also extend propaganda, targeting white children.

*The Geographical Reader for the Dixie Children "*freed" southern white children from northern textbooks' "perverted" ideas. The book contains twenty-six lessons on world geography. The first ten focus on geographical terms and the last sixteen pages examine specific countries of South America, along with their history in relation to the United States. The countries discussed represented relevant territories to the southern economy, especially the

[37] Celine Fremaux Garcia, *Céline: Remembering Louisiana, 1850-1871* (Athens: University of Georgia Press, 1988), 99.
[38] James Marten, *The Children's Civil War,* 32.
[39] Moore, *The Geographical Reader, for the Dixie Children*, 1.

region's farming industry. Lessons were linked to each Confederate state, as well as the border states, where most of the fighting occurred. Inverting Northern Civil War-themed texts that targeted young readers, this text blamed the Union for the war,

> In the year 1860 the Abolitionists became strong enough to elect one of their men for President. Abraham Lincoln was a weak man, and the South believed he would allow laws to be made, which would deprive them of their rights. So the Southern States seceded, and elected Jefferson Davis for their president. This so enraged President Lincoln that he declared war, and has exhausted nearly all the strength of the nation, in a vain attempt to whip the South back into the Union. Thousands of lives have been lost, and the earth has been drenched with blood; but still Abraham is unable to conquer the 'Rebels' as he calls the South. The South only asked to be let alone, and to divide the public.[40]

This paragraph from the text demonstrates how Confederate authors, similar to Unionist authors, presented young readers with an understanding of the roots of the war and wartime objectives. By making Abraham Lincoln out to be weak and an enemy of the South, Moore prepared young readers and cultivated political divisions. Furthermore, the Union is characterized as extremely violent while the Confederacy is depicted as innocent and peaceful. Similar to *The Drummer Boy,* this textbook shapes children's ideologies about the war and the enemy, but, unlike Trowbridge's book, it instills negative emotions rather than a sense of adventure among children.

The Geographical Reader for the Dixie Children celebrated the Confederacy, embraced Christian values, and imposed racist attitudes. For example, Moore cast Black and Indian races as inferior. In lesson ten, called "Races of Men", the author instructs to her young readers:

> The African or negro race is found in Africa. They are slothful and vicious, but possess little cunning. They are very cruel to each other, and when they have want they sell their prisoners to the white people for slaves. They know nothing of Jesus, and the climate in Africa is so unhealthy that white men can scarcely go there to preach to them. The slaves who are found in America are in much better condition. They are better fed, better clothed, and better instructed than in their native country.[41]

---

[40] *Ibid,* 13.
[41] *Ibid* ,10.

Moore depicts Africans as inhumane and malicious and, in order to act like good Christians, they needed white people. The author also illustrates the idea that white Americans are saving black Africans from their native lands and providing them with better lives with focuses on Christianity and "healthier" conditions. By illustrating this to children, Moore reinforces the idea of white supremacy in American society.

Moore also described Asian and Native American populations using similar racist descriptions. This textbook used in classrooms and taught to white children. Textbooks invoked definitive content. *The Geographical Reader* also propagated a specific narrative to white readers in the wake of the war in an effort to restore supremacy and undermine Black, Indian, and Asian. The Civil War ended, but the regional conflict remained through these materials. Throughout the decades following the post-Civil War and the Reconstruction era, white supremacist attitudes found in textbooks was imposed onto children limiting their receptivity to Reconstruction ideas and values.[42] Ultimately, *The Geographical Reader for the Dixie Children* serves as illustrative example of the types of textbooks produced during this Civil War in the South. Confederate textbooks met the need to cleanse southern white children from the "corrupt" teachings found in textbooks published by northerners and promote Confederate ideas for the war effort.

Other textbooks promoted Southern white traditions and teachings as Confederate authors cranked out books titled *The Dixie Primer and The Confederate Spelling Book.*[43] Similar to *The Geographical Reader for the Dixie Children,* these textbooks aimed to educate children, but also shape their historical memory that reflect Confederate ideals. The *Confederate Spelling Book,* for example, included several passages for children to practice their reading. Many of the passages

[42] Steven Mintz, *Huck's Raft: A History of American Childhood*, 132.
[43] James Marten, *The Children's Civil War*, 33.

include agricultural themes. The following passages illustrates this point: “A mill is made to grind wheat and corn. He sent a bag of corn to the mill and got a bag of meal for it. I must not play with a gun, for it may have a load in it.”[44] Farming- and Christian-themed stories dominated reading lessons. In *the Dixie Primer*, made specifically for younger children, Marinda Moore chronicled Christian songs and prayers. Moore emphasized the following one: “Now I lay me down to sleep, pray the Lord my soul to keep; And if I die before I wake, I pray the Lord my soul to take, And this I ask for Jesus' sake, AMEN.”[45] *The Dixie Primer* was published three years after the war; its emphasis on Confederate themes highlighted how Southern instructional literature that targeted white children preserved the conflict and inspired young generations to adopt the political ideologies that led to the war in the first place.

Enslaved children lacked access to resources, but the outbreak of the Civil War inspired hope among them. Booker T. Washington recounted the night his family found out about the Civil War and noted that his mother awakened him by “fervently praying that Lincoln and his armies might be successful, and that one day she and her children might be free.”[46] Enslaved children shared the eagerness of knowing wartime progress. Black children’s lives were also changed by the war.

The war affected black children’s play and routine of life. Eventually, the war began to disrupt the plantation system and enslaved people were relocated to Texas or other western lands.[47] Some slave owners were not able to keep their slaves in bondage and enslaved people fled across Union lines to refugee camps. James Marten maintains, “In November 1863 aid

---

[44] George L. Bidgood *The Confederate Spelling Book with Reading Lessons for the Young, Adapted to the Use of Schools or For Private Instruction* (Richmond, VA: Smith, Bailey, & Co. Printers, 1865), 15.
[45] Marinda Branson Moore, *The Dixie Primer, for the Little Folks* (Raleigh: Brandon, Farrar, & Co., 1863), 26.
[46] Booker T. Washington, *A Will to Be Free* (New York: Start Publishing LLC, 2013), 11.
[47] James Marten, *The Children’s Civil War*, 112.

workers estimated that at least 500,000 slaves, mainly women and children, had fled to refugee camps."[48] These refugee camps, although they meant freedom, were not the Union welcome many had hoped to receive. Instead, there were thousands of fugitive slaves sleeping on the ground, dying of hunger, and neglected by the Union officers. A Union officer described the inhumane treatment in a particularly disturbing way, "the suffering from hungar and cold is so great that these wretched people are dying by scores that sometimes thirty per day die and are carried off by wagons loads, without coffins, and thrown promiscuously, like brutes, into a trench."[49] Enslaved children's experiences centered on survival. If a child managed to survive the harsh conditions of the Civil War, they entered into an American society with limited help to transition into their newfound liberty from bondage.

A small number of children's texts targeting readers young enslaved audiences emerged at the end if the war to help them with the transition from slavery to liberty. Most of the texts produced for enslaved children were educational and were published after the war in response to the tens of thousands of black people embracing educational freedom. Marten states, "Many black students—adults as well as children—learned from traditional northern textbooks…but at least some had access to publications written expressly for freedmen and women."[50] The American Tract Society, an evangelical society dedicated to producing Christian-based literature, issued many educational pieces specifically for newly freedmen and women.[51] Published in 1864 and 1865, these books took on a similar format as the antebellum spellers, primers, and readers.[52] In the stories of *The Freedman's Book*, Maria Child, published stories about notable slaves,

---

[48] *Ibid,* 113.
[49] Ira Berlin, *Families and Freedom: A Documentary History of African-American Kinship in the Civil War Era* (New York: The New Press, 1998), 97
[50] James Marten, *The Children's Civil War*, 62.
[51] *Ibid,* 61.
[52] *Ibid,* 62.

praising them for their good and noble characters. She often connected their deeds to Christian themes as for instance with William Boen, an eighteenth-century slave, whose religious journey she described:

> Pursuing this course, he became careful not to do anything which did not bring peace to his soul; and as the soul can never be peaceful when it disobeys God, he was continually travelling toward Zion while he strove to follow this inward light in his soul; and the more humbly he tried to follow it, the clearer the light became. He did not always keep in the straight path. Sometimes he did or said something wrong; then peace went away from his mind. But he confessed his sin before God, and prayed for strength not to do wrong anymore.[53]

Child, through William Boen, demonstrates to enslaved people how to act as Christians. They should keep peace and strive to please God and when they do not, they need to pray. This lesson as well as many others in *The Freedman's Book* taught black people how to act in white society and adhere to white values.

Christianity remained a prominent theme in freedmen and women's literature, education remained the primary focus. White publishers and authors placed a significant emphasis on teaching pronunciation. The *Freedman's Spelling Book* created numerous tongue twisters for freedpeople to practice. One reads, "A jest or joke which in-jures one is un-just. The jewels were juggled by the jury to be stolen."[54] By writing several tongue twisters throughout the book, freedmen and women were supposed to learn the correct pronunciation and practice difficult pronunciations. Tongue twisters and other pronunciation practices consistently appear throughout the freedman's publications, demonstrating how literature responded to the perceived need to assimilate black people into the white world.

---

[53] Lydia Maria Child, *The Freedmen's Book* (Cambridge: University Press: Welch, Bigelow, & Co., Cambridge, 1865), 26.
[54] *The Freedman's Spelling-Book* Cornhill, (Boston: American Tract Society, 1866), 47

Civil War children's literature recast situations children might encounter in real life. For Northern children, children's literature combined distraction and the boosting of nationalism. Fathers and brothers were off fighting in the war, so authors made the war seem like a desirable adventure similar to John T. Townsend's *The Drummer Boy*. Easing anxieties, stress, and trauma, children's books focused on wartime adventures, appealing to children's wanderlust. For southern children, adults produced textbooks to instruct them about ideologies of the Confederacy. Southern publishers produced some child-centered literature through textbooks that re-cast the educational lessons presented in Northern textbooks and emphasize the Confederate cause. Marinda Moore's 1863 *The Geographical Reader for the Dixie Children* brought together pedagogical lessons and ideological messages that cast the Confederacy as a new "country."[55] Through these publications, authors shaped children's political viewpoints that would stick with them throughout the Reconstruction era. Formerly enslaved children had limited access to child-centered texts. However, in the post-Civil War era, an influx of textbooks addressed freedmen, women, and child audiences. Mainly produced by the American Tract Society, literature for newly freed slaves mainly focused on Christianity as well as pronunciation, grammar, and other literary skills necessary for freedpeople to know in the white American society. These publications, however, would not prepare freedpeople for the decades of racial injustice and racial hate to come.

Escaping the Great War: World War One and Real-Life Characters in Children's Fiction

World War One called upon all citizens, including children, to participate in the war effort. Caretakers, educators, parents, and the government relied on children's literature to mobilize

[55] Marinda Branson Moore, *The Geographical Reader, for the Dixie Children*.

children to serve the nation. The most important way children could serve in World War One was through gardening and providing food—an effort Civil War literature echoed as well. Food shortages impacted every child and the government called on them to help by creating programs like the U.S. School Garden Army, Boy Scouts, and Girl Scouts. The government even went as far as calling children "soldiers of the soil."[56] Food shortages defined citizens' concerns at home and soldiers abroad.[57] Schools encouraged children to contribute to the food shortages such as food preservation and taking care of plants in winter months. Children's literature helped mobilize children to battle food shortages.

The U.S. School Garden Army (USSGA), a branch of the Board of Education, directed these changes through the publication of materials for both teachers and students. The USSGA was launched in 1917 with the intention of making every school-aged child aware of how they could demonstrate their loyalty to the United States through agriculture. Updated lesson plans with a focus on showing loyalty to the United States defined American classrooms. Through these lessons, children learned ways to preserve and grow food. In *Elementary School Agriculture: A Teacher's Manual to Accompany Hilgard and Oosterhout's Agriculture for Schools of the Pacific Slope*, Ernest Babcock, a plant geneticist and Cyril Stebbins, an educator focused on agricultural education, addressed how educators needed to be teaching skills that were practical for use later in life not simply during wartime.[58] The authors asserted, "The mechanics of the school work adapts him [the student] in time to textbook situations, but does not make him easily adjustable to the shifting circumstances of life outside of the school."[59] Gardening was not

[56] David M. Kennedy, *Over Here: The First World War and American Society* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1980), 55.
[57] *Ibid* 55.
[58] Ernest B. Babcock and Cyril A. Stebbins, *Elementary School Agriculture: A Teacher's Manual to Accompany Hilgard and Oosterhout's Agriculture for Schools of the Pacific Slope* (New York: The Macmillan Company, 1911), 40.
[59] *Ibid.* 49

merely an outside activity, but a means for civic engagement. Herbert Hoover, who led Food Administration during World War One, quickly began to target children as active agents through propaganda.[60] Propaganda [images 2.1], another channel that adults utilized to mobilize children, became increasingly popular during the First World War. [61]

Image 2.1: The Food Administration headed by Herbert Hoover produced propaganda posters.

Through these prints, and many others, Hoover's Food Administration mobilized children encouraging them to directly contribute to the war effort. The use of real children, rather than fictional characters or cartoon drawings, in government-sponsored images [images 2.1] remains especially important as it shows how the government aimed to make children feel intimately connected to the war. The second image above centers on a girl whose work is linked to male soldiers' work in the army. Children's everyday life is cast in military terms. The United States

[60] Kennedy, *Over Here: The First World War and American Society.*
[61] *Helping Hoover in Our U.S. School Garden*. (New York: American Lithographic Co. 1918).

School Garden Army replicates the adult army. By placing these prints in classrooms, libraries, and newspapers, Herbert Hoover and the Food Administration made sure children recognized the critical roles they could and should play during the war.[62] These images also elevated children's place as citizens.

Food rationing and gardening went beyond the classroom and many children's books produced during World War One emphasized food preservation. Thornton W. Burgess's *The Adventures of Paddy the Beaver*, incorporated calls for food preservation. Burgess, also known as the bedtime story man, gained popularity with his children's stories focusing on nature and animals. *The Adventures of Paddy the Beaver* is a chapter book detailing the adventures of a hardworking beaver. Published in 1917, Thornton W. Burgess wrote this book in the midst of World War One. America officially entered the war, and all resources were dedicated to the war effort. The narrative centers on Paddy, an extremely hardworking beaver, finishing his harvest and showing children the characteristics of hard work and why it pays off, specifically when it comes to food preservation. The book begins with a short poem, "Work, work, all night; While the stars are shinning bright; Work, work all the day; I have got no time to play."[63] This poem lays out major themes: work ethic and playtime in favor of a more critical cause. Children, similar to the Civil War, were called upon in unprecedented ways, but their work was necessary to fulfill President Woodrow Wilson's call to "make the world safe for democracy."

Yet, Burgess combined lesson about wartime sacrifice and childhood-specific pastimes to restore notions of normalcy during these unparalleled times. Burgess showed Paddy as a hard worker, who still made time for play. He writes,

> Of course it wasn't quite true, that about working all night and all day. Nobody could do that, you know, and keep it up. Everybody has to rest and sleep. Yes, and everybody has to play a

[62] Kennedy, *Over Here: The First World War and American Society.*
[63]Thornton Burgess, *The Adventure of Paddy the Beaver* (Boston: Little Brown, 1917), 20.

> little to be at their best. So it wasn't quite true that Passy worked all day after working all night.[64]

This passage embraces ideas about a healthy, happy, a more protected childhood that middle class families adopted in the wake of the Civil War. Children should rest and enjoy their childhood.[65] By protecting innocence, adults aimed to keep children's involvement to the war limited avoiding direct encounters with wartime violence.

World War One-era literature recast the notion of the enemy. Authors relied on fictional characters. In his *The Adventures of Paddy the Beaver*, Burgess used a coyote, named Old Man Coyote as a clever villain, who is on the hunt for Paddy the Beaver. By making the enemy a sly coyote, Burgess preserved innocence for children while casting the world in binaries. The coyote is a fictional character and poses no direct threat to children. At some points, the coyote is made out to be a foolish character, adding some humor to the story.

The *Adventures of Paddy the Beaver* reveals an evolution from children's literature published during the Civil War and during World War One. Characters took on the form of animals carrying out important responsibilities. Burgess consistently demonstrates, through the protagonist, Paddy the Beaver, that hard work remains rewarding and necessary. Specifically, during the war, the USSGA and government called on children's active involvement in agricultural production. Burgess responds to this call by showing children Paddy the Beaver as a diligent and dedicated helper when collecting food for the winter. Burgess's enemy offers comedic relief throughout the story. Ultimately, Burgess demonstrates that American children do not need to lose their carefree childhood, even when participating in wartime efforts.

---

[64] *Ibid*, 2.
[65] Mintz. *Huck's Raft*, 132.

Similar to the Civil War, family separation raised a lot of anxiety in children. Fathers, brothers, and uncles were off fighting in Europe. Children's literature also responded with books and stories that eased these children's worries. These stories transported children into places that were dreamlike and exuded magic. For example, John Rae, an American artist well-known for his paintings, wrote *New Adventures of Alice,* a spin-off of Lewis Carroll's books in 1917 when the United States declared war. American fathers and brothers were leaving, mothers were stepping into untraditional roles, and children were taking on more responsibility.[66] At this critical moment of what was then the most gruesome war in history, Rae published *New Adventures of Alice* distracting young Americans from the bloody realities that covered the front pages of newspapers and dominated radio announcements. This book is a tale of Betsy, a young girl, and her adventures in a dream after longing for another Alice book. Betsy finds herself in the world of Mother Goose and encounters characters from the Mother Goose stories throughout her adventure. This book presents several ideas about the wartime, including the changing gender roles and themes of heroism and sacrifice.

Unlike Civil War-era literature, World War One-themed texts also featured female protagonists. This shift also indicates the emergence of separate consumer markets for boys and girls.[67] Books with gentle tales and tame adventures dominated girl-centered culture while wild, action-packed books predominantly entertained boys. In *The New Adventures of Alice*, for example, Alice's adventures include solving a puzzle to earn a piece of pie instead of some violent battle that would be seen in a boy-intended novel. The other characters in the book, which are Mother Goose, the author of several French fairy tales, characters, also add to the

[66] Kennedy, *Over Here: The First World War and American Society.*
[67] Mintz, *Huck's Raft,* 214.

gentle tone of the book.[68] The book opens with Image 2.2, showcasing foolish characters and a witty storyline.

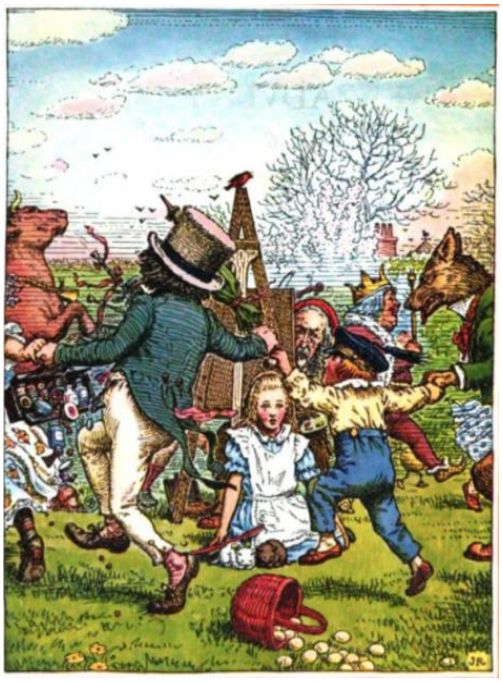


Image 2.2: Opening picture of *New Adventures of Alice* with Betsy, the protagonist, and Mother Goose characters running around her.

This book is an imitation of Lewis Carroll's *Alice*. It follows a young girl, Betsy, through her dream of a new Alice book. The book's wartime themes exude heroic idealism. For example, one character, Johnny Stout, stated, "What's your hurry? It keeps you busy this being a hero, always running about to drowning accidents and affairs of that sort."[69] Throughout the rest of this character's appearance in the chapter, he acts in a foolish manner while consistently reminding Alice that he is indeed a hero. This character not only added a comedic effect to the book, but he

[68] John Rae, *New Adventures of Alice*, 3.
[69] Rae, *New Adventures of Alice*, 56.

also reassured children, who deemed their soldier fathers, uncles, and brothers as heroes, by hiding the harsh realities of being a "hero" and, instead, highlighting the goodness of heroes. Furthermore, Johnny Stout adds to Rae's framework of this book being an adventure for children. Historian David Kennedy maintains that World War One remained an upbeat adventure in children's literature and asserts that, in children's literature, "neither negative notes nor ambiguities were permissible."[70] By producing works that focused on the optimism of adventure, World War One Era authors sought to ease children's anxieties about death and destructions mobilizing them for wartime.

Similar to the Civil War, children's literature responded to the need to mobilize children for war but placed a new emphasis on protecting their "innocence." *New Adventures of Alice* represents the types of literature published in response to the First World War and the changing ideologies of childhood protection. While distracting children from the gruesome realities of World War One, Rae incorporates themes of heroism and patriotism through characters like Johnny Stout. The book industry also responded to changing notions of women's place in society by centering the narrative on a female character.

World War One-themed children's literature responded to the unique changes that the war abroad brought. The United States government called on all Americans to contribute to agricultural production. Through the USSGA, agricultural production became a vital part of children's education. Children's text authors echoed this imperative and produced literature like Rae's *The Adventures of Paddy the Beaver* that taught children the importance of hard work, embraced gendered narratives even when featuring female characters, and relied on fictional worlds. In contrast to the Civil War, depictions of the enemy revolved around animal characters

[70] Kennedy, *Over Here: The First World War and American Society*, 56.

that defused real life threats among children. Furthermore, authors continued to protect carefree childhoods by transporting children to different places in their stories. This presumably resonated with American children whose fathers fought abroad. Authors like Thornton W. Burgess in *New Adventures of Alice* exemplified this by transporting characters to different realms of realities. Wartime writers did not completely dismiss the war. Sacrifice dominated storylines such as *The Adventures of Paddy the Beaver* and in *New Adventures of Alice,* themes of heroism informed the narrative. World War I-era children's book authors created magic to distract children while promoting political messages. Books like the *New Adventures of Alice* also disrupted the status quo by promoting female protagonists, responding the changes that feminists and women's rights activists advocated in the early twentieth century. Ultimately, World War One children's books and print culture responded to America's needs to mobilize children to meet the agricultural needs while also reacting to the changes in American society.

Redefining Enemies and Friends:
Heroic Characters Battle Real Evil in World War Two-Era Children's Literature

During World War Two, children became the most avid collectors of scrap metal, bought the most war bonds, and rationed food.[71] While fathers were off fighting on the war front in Europe and mothers filling jobs men left behind, children found ample ways to contribute to the war effort. In fact, their lives revolved around World War Two. Children and teenagers developed their own sense of culture which challenged parental authority. Even when not fighting on the front lines, children remained susceptible to the horrors of war through mass media culture.

[71] William Tuttle, *Daddy's Gone to War* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1993), 58.

Yet, as historian William Tuttle illustrates, "Considering the nation's appetite for war-related material, publishers released surprisingly few war titles for children."[72] Children's books still provided stability for children by producing stories that were not focused on the war. Wartime issues did not dominate children's book contents.

However, many of these books instilled a sense of patriotism in children and mobilized them for the war at home. Literature helped young citizens grapple with unique roles the government agencies assigned them. Published in 1942, Walter Farley's *Larry and the Undersea Raider* represented one example of children's texts that directly addressed wartime issues. Best known for *The Black Stallion*, Farley establishes a sense of patriotism in American children. Americans had just officially entered the Second World War at this point. Authors responded to this change with literature that mobilized children.

The bombing of Pearl Harbor traumatized Americans, especially young children. An unnamed grade schoolboy wrote, "in the darkness overhead…We thought about being bombed. We thought about dying. We thought about losing each other."[73] While published after the bombing, Farley's book takes place *before* Pearl Harbor in Hawaii and centers around two teenage boys, Larry Wilson and Liholo Halakma, who stumble across a secret submarine base. It is not clear what motivated Farley to produce this text, but his story, set at Pearl Harbor, restores children's feelings of patriotism. This story also gave them an alternative ending to the traumatic events that transpired at Pearl Harbor.

Through the protagonist, Larry, the author demonstrates the patriotism Americans exhibited during this time. Larry supported and respected his father, a lieutenant commander in the United States military. Larry felt a deep admiration and respect for his father. Farley demonstrates how

[72] *Ibid* 156.
[73] Tuttle, *Daddy's Gone to War*, 6.

men fighting in war were admired and respected even when their absence could be traumatizing. Tuttle writes, "To these home front boys and girls, nothing was more unsettling than the father's departure for military service."[74] Boys especially became frustrated with their father's absence. Seemingly intended for boy audiences, this book guides them to understand their father's absence as a form of patriotism and features male characters to convey broader societal values.

Since this was published after Pearl Harbor, American animosity toward Japan dominated public discourses. Larry finding the hidden Japanese submarine makes him an easily liked American hero of the story. In Civil War-themed literature, God or children themselves represented "American heroes." In Farley's book, symbols such as the American flag operate as vehicles for patriotism: "When Larry saw the American flag flying from the mast of the destroyer, a great pride and happiness flooded through every part of his body."[75] By making Larry a hero, who defeats the Japanese, Farley's book celebrates American pride and victory. Farley also recasts American pride through the friendship between Larry and Liholo, a native Hawaiian. One line reads, "Larry realized now what Li meant when he had said proudly that he was a full-blooded Hawaiian. These men were perfect physical specimens."[76] While Farley's story seeks to unite different American racial identities, the book's narrative builds on and reproduces racist assumptions about native Hawaiians. The wording "full-blooded" others Liholo and recasts presumed racial categories. The story stressed the racial differences of the characters. The illustrations in the book affirm this aspect. Farley attempted to break these racial tensions and differences by uniting an American and Hawaiian character while still marking the racial difference between Hawaiians and whites.

---

[74] *Ibid,* 30.
[75] Walter Farley, *Larry and the Undersea Raider* (New York: Random House, 1942), 195.
[76] *Ibid* 204.

In the wake of Pearl Harbor, Walter Farley's *Larry and the Undersea Raider* featured a white teenager and his non-white, Hawaiian friend who restored American power through the discovery of a secret Japanese military.[77] This book reinforces children's confidence about American confidence that had been diminished as a result of Pearl Harbor. This book also guides children to understand their father's absence through the protagonist. Coming at a crucial time in World War Two, *Larry and the Undersea Raider*, gave children an alternative ending to Pearl Harbor and reinforced ideas about America's strength to its youngest citizens.

In contrast to World War One, World War Two-themed literature returns to realistic and tangible characters when characterizing the enemy. For example, government propaganda racialized the Japanese and Hitler while using white children as the symbol for prowess, innocence, and victory. The re-emergence of a realistic enemy in children's literature prominently demonstrates how adults wanted to shape children's political perspectives about a world defined by good and evil.

A good example of this drastic change in the representation of the enemy can be observed in comic books. Comic books function as an integral part of children's literature. They tell stories, keep children informed about world events, and, for World War Two, they mobilized children. Mintz argues, "[Wartime comic books] served an educational and ideological function."[78] Comics stirred up hatred against political enemies and celebrated American heroes. Comics deserved to be thoroughly analyzed as a form of children's literature because their popularity during World War Two had a profound impact on mobilizing children for war.

Although the United States did not officially enter the war until December 1941, the war quickly consumed children's print culture. The comic *Daredevil Battles Hitler* activated deep-

[77] *Ibid*.
[78] Steven Mintz. *Huck's Raft: A History of American Childhood*. 264.

seated pride in the idea of the American hero while stimulating antagonism against wartime enemies.[79] This comic acted as a form of propaganda.

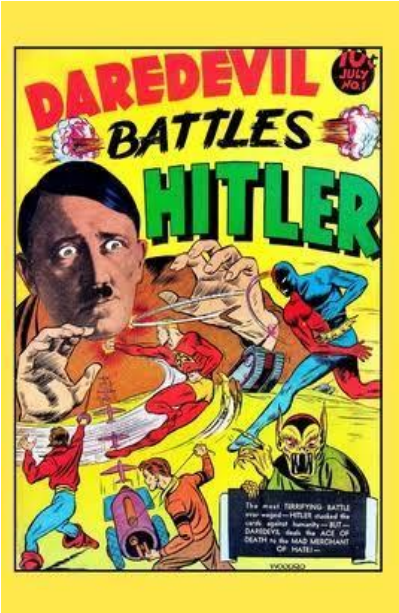


Figure 3.1: Cover page for *Daredevil Battles Hitler* comic book

Germany embodied the enemy even before America even entered the war. In *Daredevil Battles Hitler*, the opening panels make Hitler out to be a selfish man who does not care about sacrificing soldiers. Hitler makes his decisions relying on a crystal ball. Illustrations and narrative ridicule Hitler's dictatorship and leadership. Through these artistic details, authors highlighted American diplomatic strength. Children were able to purchase comics and forego parental objections.

Comics embraced American values and pride. In *Daredevil Battles Hitler,* a Nazi soldier emerges, wearing nothing but underwear, creating a comedic effect while removing power from Hitler's growing influence in Europe. The violence depicts Nazis as weak while Daredevil, the

[79] Lev Gleason. *Daredevil Battles Hitler*. (New York: Lev Gleason Publications, 1942).

American hero, exhibits strength and prowess. In fact, Daredevil, with the help of some other American superheroes, saves England from Hitler's takeover. One illustration shows Churchill thanking the American superheroes for their service—the story casts Americans as saviors.

Historian Paula Fass addresses children's heroic efforts highlighted in American culture. She maintains, "When the United States emerged victorious after World War Two, the clear winners were the children of the nation."[80] In the wake of the war, the government began to pour more resources into schools raising education standards and responding to the baby boom.[81] World War Two children's literature played a crucial role in accelerating these changes. Assuming children as blank slates, World War II-era authors recast youth as vessels for U.S. hegemony. World War II-era children literature linked real-life characters' adventurous tales with political messages. Published at the beginning of the war, *Larry and the Undersea Raider*, taught children about the importance of understanding their new patriotic duties. Furthermore, they are reassured of the United States' power by being presented an alternative ending for Pearl Harbor. The attack on Pearl Harbor became a source of American children's fears. In *Daredevil Battles Hitler*, American superheroes fight Nazis and other evil doers.[82] Adolf Hitler was not replaced by a fictional villain but retained his identity as the dictator of Germany. Wartime evil was barred from fictional assignments. In doing so, authors kept the enemy in the real world—a world of binaries that left little room beyond good and evil. Through comics, American authors restored order and bolstered U.S. strength of the enemy in children's eyes. Ultimately, World War II-era children's literature imbued youth with a sense of purpose and leadership.

---

[80] Paula Fass, *The End of American Childhood: History of Parenting from Life on the Frontier to the Managed Child* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2016), 170.
[81] Mintz, *Huck's Raft: A History of American Childhood*, 282.
[82] Lev Gleason, *Daredevil Battles Hitler*.

Conclusion

America's modern childhood is not defined by biological development; social and cultural forces inform the constructions of childhood and the experiences of youth.[83] During wartime, children's place and their relation to citizenship evolves to meet military, cultural, and political objectives. During the Civil War, World War One, and World War Two, adults targeted children through print culture such as literature, comics, and government-sponsored propaganda. children's stories reinforce core morals of a society that define generations.

This thesis engaged a broader arc of children's print culture during wartime. There are limitations to this approach. In many cases authorial intentions remain elusive and contemporary historians at times lack critical access to context that produced this literature. Historians may not fully be able to assess children's access to print culture and how race, region, gender, and socioeconomic factors limited the reach of publications produced during and after World War Two. My research was limited to certain types of children's print culture in light of copyright laws.

This thesis offers new directions for future research on the history of American children's literature. Through the analysis of children's print culture, historians can advance a better understanding about the values children consumed in the course of American history in the context of broader cultural and political changes. For instance, scholars might consider how movements for social justice shaped the children's book industry and, vice versa, namely the role that children's books play in introducing young readers to race, civil rights, and political protest. Wartime literature shows how conceptions of race are recast and at times defy political discourses, as can be seen in *Larry and the Undersea Raider*, in which Larry's sidekick, native

[83] Mintz. *Huck's Raft,* 381.

Hawaiian Liholo, reinforcing connections of mainland citizens to Hawaiians after the bombing of Pearl Harbor.[84]

Childhood provides historians with a more intimate account about how war unfolds on the home front. Childhood represents as a critical link between the private and public and between becoming and being. The Civil War, World War One, or World War Two informed young people's sense of self and citizenship. Childhood represents a mirror of the values society deemed important. Children's print culture constitutes a channel through which these beliefs become visible and reveal how narration and illustrations at times reproduce power, racial hierarchies, and gendered notions. Yet, without young people's documented responses to children's text, scholars' understanding of the impact of children's print culture remains limited inviting future research that considers on oral histories.

[84] Farley. *Larry and the Undersea Raider*. 15.

Bibliography

Primary Sources

Babcock, Ernest B. and Cyril A. Stebbins. *Elementary School Agriculture: A Teacher's Manual to Accompany Hilgard and Oosterhout's Agriculture for Schools of the Pacific Slope*. New York: The Macmillan Company, 1911.

Berry, Carrie. *Diary of Carrie Berry*. North Mankato, MN: Capstone Press, 2014.

Bidgood, George L. *The Confederate Spelling Book with Reading Lessons for the Young, Adapted to the Use of Schools or For Private Instruction*. Richmond, VA: Smith, Bailey, & Co. Printers, 1865.

Burgess, Thornton. *The Adventure of Paddy the Beaver.* Boston: Little Brown, 1917.

Chancellor, Susan M. *Personal Recollections of the Battle of Chancellorsville*. Frankfort, KY: Register of the Kentucky Historical Society, 1968.

Child, Lydia Maria. *The Freedmen's Book*. Cambridge: University Press: Welch, Bigelow, & Co., Cambridge, 1865.

Delong, Hermon W. *Boyhood Reminiscences: Life in Dansville 1855-1872*. Dansville, NY: Dansville Press, 1913.

Garcia, Celine Fremaux. *Céline: Remembering Louisiana, 1850-1871*. Athens: University of Georgia Press, 1988.

Gleason, Lev. *Daredevil Battles Hitler*. New York: Lev Gleason Publications, 1942.

Helping Hoover in our U.S. school garden. United States. New York: American Lithographic Co. 1918.

Kirke, Edmund. "The Little Prisoner." *Our Young Folks*, Boston: April 1865.

Lunt, Dolly Sumner. *A Woman's Wartime Journal: AN Account of the Passage Over a Georgia Plantation of Sherman's Army on the March to the Sea, as Recorded in the Diary of Dolly Sumner Lunt*. New York: The Century Co., 1918.

Moore, Marinda Branson. *The Dixie Primer, for the Little Folks*. Raleigh: Brandon, Farrar, & Co., 1863.

Moore, Marinda Branson. *The Geographical Reader, for the Dixie Children*. Raleigh: Farrar and Co., 1863.

Penfield, Edward. *Join the United States school garden army - Enlist now*. New York: American Lithographic Co, 1918.

Rae, John. *New Adventures of Alice*. Chicago: P.F. Volland Company, 1917.

Roosevelt, Franklin D. "Fireside Chat," New York: Library of Congress, December 9, 1941.

Stebbins, Cyril A. *A Manual of School-Supervised Gardening for the Western States, United States School Garden Army*. Washington DC: Govt. print. off, 1920.

The Freedman's Spelling-Book. Cornhill, Boston: American Tract Society, 1866.

Trowbridge, John. *The Drummer Boy*. Boston: Lee and Shepard, 1862.

Farley, Walter. *Larry and the Undersea Raider*. New York: Random House, 1942.

Washington, Booker T. *A Will to Be Free*. New York: Start Publishing LLC, 2013.

Who's Who. Chicago: A & C Black, 1907.

Secondary Literature

Berlin, Ira. *Families and Freedom: A Documentary History of African-American Kinship in the Civil War Er*a. New York: The New Press, 1998.

Fass, Paula. *The End of American Childhood: History of Parenting from Life on the Frontier to the Managed Child*. Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2016.

Kelly, Gordon R.. *Children's Periodicals of the United States* Westport: Greenwood Press 1984.

Kennedy, David M.. *Over Here: The First World War and American Society.* New York: Oxford University Press, 1980.

MacLeod, Anne Scott. *American Childhood: Essays on Children's Literature of the Nineteenth and Twentieth Century* Athens and London: The University of Georgia Press, 1994.

Marten, James. *The Children's Civil War*. Chapel Hill: The University of North Carolina Press, 1998.

Marten, James and Robert Coles. *Children and War: A Historical Anthology*. New York: New York University Press, 2002.

Mintz, Steven. *Huck's Raft: A History of American Childhood*. Cambridge: Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 2004.

Winik, Jay. *April 1865: The Month That Saved America*. New York: HarperCollins Publishers, 2001.

Tuttle, William. *Daddy's Gone to War*. New York: Oxford University Press, 1993.